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HELEN IN THE TANK.

See page 20.

MAURICE GUILDFORD;

OR,

THE TRIALS OF A SMALL BOY.



LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

56, PATERNOSTER ROW, 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, AND
164, PICCADILLY; SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
"DELAYS ARE DANGEROUS"	7

CHAPTER II.

"LITTLE BOATS MUST KEEP NEAR SHORE"	14
---	----

CHAPTER III.

"PRIDE THAT DINES ON VANITY SUPS ON CON- TEMPT"	23
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

"HE IS THE BEST MASTER WHO MASTERS HIM- SELF"	37
--	----

CHAPTER V.

"OUT OF DEBT, OUT OF DANGER"	46
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

"CLOUDY MORNINGS OFTEN BRING CLEAR EVEN- INGS"	58
---	----

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
"IF THE BRAIN SOWS NOT CORN, IT PLANTS THISTLES"	67

CHAPTER VIII.

"BETTER SUFFER ILL THAN DO ILL"	75
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

"TRUTH FINDS FOES WHERE IT MAKES NONE" ...	84
--	----

CHAPTER X.

"HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY"	96
------------------------------------	----

MAURICE GUILDFORD;

OR,

THE TRIALS OF A SMALL BOY.

CHAPTER I.

DELAYS ARE DANGEROUS.

MAURICE's trials came on him long before he went to his first school, yes, and before he was promoted to the dignity of jackets and trousers. Indeed, if you asked how old he was at his first trial of all, I should not tell you how old, but how young he was.

As far back as memory can stretch, however, his earliest trial had to do with an old-fashioned Dutch clock. This old clock had a dark oak case, and stood in the dining-room, a room which might almost be said to be made of oak, for there were oak beams in the ceiling, oak panels on the walls, oak wainscoting and chimney piece, and it had a polished oak floor. Under the black heavy table it was Maurice's

custom and delight to play in the twilight at robbers and wolf. And the wooden men in armour that supported the sideboard with their shoulders and heads never made any objection to having their noses pulled, and their bodies embraced as many times a day as he liked.

But this is what the clock had to do with his trial. While roving about one evening in the dining-room at play, in the character of a pirate at sea, he had moored his vessel to a footstool close to it, and was sitting watching to pounce upon any rich merchantman that might be cruising in the straits between the sofa and the window-seat, when it struck him all at once that there was a giant asleep in the clock case.

"And I have landed on his island," thought the small boy. "If he has had dinner he is sound, and I shall be able to escape without waking him ; but if he has not I am lost."

So he listened to the giant's heart beating, and was just about to set sail for a more hospitable shore, when suddenly, with a groan, a whirr, and great commotion, which startled him not a little, the clock struck five.

Quickly recovering his presence of mind, he sprang into the waves to escape the clutches of the awakened monster.

"Why, what are you about, Maurice?" said his aunt, who was seated at the bow-window, knitting ; "don't kick a hole in the carpet."

"I'm swimming," said he ; "but I had better go back than drown."

So, turning himself with difficulty, he struggled to the footstool once more, and gave himself up.

What a job he had to avoid a hand-to-hand combat, and to bring the giant to a parley, and to draw up the articles of peace cannot be told. But the end of it was that he became a vassal, bound to bring into his liege lord every ship he could take, on consideration of his life being spared to him, and his having enough to eat.

These terms being agreed upon, he set off upon a piratical cruise on the giant's behalf, and soon was so fortunate as to secure a valuable prize. It was a silver sugar basin with handles at both ends, and he took it in tow at once. Having arrived at the island, he gently opened the door of the giant's dwelling, and glancing upwards with awe, deposited it safely within. Much gratified with the success of his first enterprise, his master bid him forthwith set sail again.

This time, after a hard-fought and gallant encounter, he was on the point of taking captive the muffineer from the stand beneath the side-board, when he heard his sister close the school-room door, and run gaily down stairs, having finished her lessons, and call him, "Maurice, Maurice."

He rushed out gladly to welcome her return to liberty, for, after all, buccaneering by oneself was but poor amusement, and entered at once with eagerness into a scheme for roasting a

couple of apples hung up by string before the fire in the housekeeper's room.

But that evening, when the small boy was snugly curled up asleep in his cot, there was no little search made, as you may imagine, when the sugar basin was wanted for tea.

"Please, ma'am, I can't find it nowhere," said the servant; and then the mistress looked, but was not a whit more successful. She inquired, but no one had moved or used it since it was put away after breakfast.

But this would never do; it was a real silver basin, and a valued family heirloom besides. So all were set to hunt for it, and such a fuss as there was! they talked of nothing else hardly till it was time to go to bed; but nobody guessed it was one of the small boy's tricks. He was commonly so much less interested in the basin than in its contents, that even on the next day it never entered people's minds that he could be the cause of the mystery.

The interview with the giant in the clock-case so soon passed away from his memory that when his father held a court of inquiry in the dining-room, it was quite by accident that he was present, much to his regret that he had not escaped a bidding to sit still.

It was some time before he was able to understand what it was all about; and not until the questioning had reached the cook, and his father asked, "When did you see it last?" and cook replied that she "hadn't a seed it for days,"

that a stinging conviction arose in his mind that he himself had certainly seen it somewhere not very long ago ; and by-and-bye, during a pause, when the clock's "tick, tick," sounded loudly through the room, he suddenly remembered his game of pirate on the evening before ; and when it came to him that he himself was the culprit and the cause of all this stir, sitting there on his little stool, he blushed out rosy red in a moment. Not a soul was heeding him, however, or they might have thought it strange that he sat so unusually quiet ; but could they have seen the working of his little mind they would have thought it a great deal stranger.—For his trial had begun.

His first impulse was to dive under the table to try if his case looked more satisfactory from that humble point of view, but the enormity of his crime as he imagined sat upon him too heavily.

He was a nervous and sensitive small boy at all times, and the solemnity of the present proceedings had awed him not a little.

"I ought to get right up and tell, I know," thought he ; "but what will they say ? It's only over there, too ! I'm afraid to tell, and yet I ought. I can't—I daren't. I'll just put it back, and no one will know."

The idea of escape relieved him for a moment. But then he heard his father say, "If any one is aware of what has become of it and will not confess, let them remember that they can hide

nothing from the eye of God, and their sin will surely find them out."

"Oh," thought he, "God knows it all, and yet I can't speak; and it is so wrong not to tell! What will become of me?" And when the servants left the room he ran out with them as miserable a little fellow as ever he was in his life. He found his way to the yard, but Nero tugging at his chain could give him no comfort. He wandered into the shrubbery, and, sitting down on a wheelbarrow, had a hard fight with himself as to what he should do. Although all kinds of naughty things came into his mind, he never once thought of telling a lie. The question was—should he or should he not confess?

At last he said to himself, "It is getting worse by putting off every minute; and if I don't tell now I shall not tell at all, I'm afraid." And then, with a desperate effort, he rose and went in to his father.

So the trial was over, and the right side won.

He described his play on the evening before, and how he had hidden the basin for fun; and when his father asked why he had not spoken out at once, he confessed that he was afraid, and that at first he was tempted not to say anything at all about it, but to put the basin back again as before.

And this is what his father said to him before he went and showed everybody where the sugar-basin was.

"Now you have felt, Maurice, my boy, how

hard it is to keep down what is bad within. Be sure you will often have trials like this, as we all have, for we all have evil hearts; but pray for the help of God's Holy Spirit to think and do what is right, and God will always hear you, and give you what is needful. Above all, when you have done wrong, for God cannot bear to look upon sin, ask him to forgive you for Christ his dear Son's sake."

CHAPTER II.

“ LITTLE BOATS MUST KEEP NEAR SHORE.”

MR. GUILDFORD was right when he told his son that he would often have trials like the last to undergo. And before many weeks were over, his words came true. But in order to make how it happened plain, I must describe the house and garden where our hero lived.

It was situated on the slope of a rather high hill, with woods and fir plantations rising still higher behind and around, so that the house looked from a distance like a nest among the trees. On one side was the kitchen garden, on the other a paddock or two, where the horses and cows were generally to be seen, and in front the flower garden and lawn stretched down to a beautiful trout stream, which murmured and chattered as it ran sparkling cheerfully on its way to the sea. And from a terrace below the drawing-room windows a glimpse of the sea could be seen, and the rich meadows of the valley and the hills on the opposite side, with the village church peeping up at a little distance among the elms, combined to make a charming, everchanging view of beauty and interest.

To be sure a railway had of late made its noisy way even into that secluded and peaceful

corner of old England, and the four-horse coaches that used to pass and repass on this great high road, now but little frequented, had driven off, never to return again. But the shrill whistle of the trains could but faintly be heard from the hills, and the line of white steam curling away in the distance was no unsightly object after all.

Maurice was now old enough to appreciate thoroughly the pleasures of his delightful home, and it was a never-failing joy to wander in the plantations, which seemed to him boundless, to watch the rooks in the rookery, or the rabbits at play by the cover side. But there were certain places into which he was strictly forbidden ever to venture alone; for as he was fond of running about by himself, he might easily get into mischief. His sister Ellen, who was only a few years older than he, was his inseparable companion when she was not at her lessons; and as the small boy's studies were soon over, he had to invent games by himself until she appeared. Now one of those places into which the children were forbidden to enter, was a small wood at the back of the kitchen garden. The wall with fruit trees trained against it was overtopped on the other side by a row of stately Lombardy poplars; and the Scotch larch and spruce fir trees mingling their branches thickly together, made a dark shade beneath. Into this wood the children were fond of peering through the bars of the tall iron gate, half frightened at the

contrast between the brightness of the garden in which they were playing, and the gloom outside. And they used to fancy that all kinds of adventures were certainly to be met with there, could they ever summon up courage, and if they had permission to explore.

But permission was never granted, for this reason : among those dark trees, not a hundred yards from the iron gate, there was an uncovered tank of rain water, which supplied the stables and out-houses, not very deep certainly, but of sufficient depth to test Master Maurice's swimming accomplishments a great deal more effectually than the dining-room carpet, on which, as we have seen, he used to disport himself.

Sometimes, at his earnest entreaties, and holding his father's hand, he had visited the tank and rambled through the wood ; but he did not care to wander far into its recesses, and always felt more secure and happy when by his father's side. But this place had a great and mysterious attraction for him. He used to think of it at night, and all his imaginative perils from robbers and wild beasts had their origin there.

His great ambition, therefore, was to make his way in alone ; and notwithstanding that his childish fears were so strong, the perversity of his naughty heart which tempted him to disobey, was a continual trial. And one bright day in June the trial came upon him stronger than ever.

That morning an excursion to the sea had been arranged, and all, excepting Helen and her

brother, who could enjoy a whole holiday quite as much at home by themselves, were packing into carriages at the door.

The bustle of departure was soon over, and the children, as they stood upon the steps, were bidden to be good; and then having watched the party winding away along the road, down the hills, and over the bridge, Helen ran in to put on her hat, looking forward with delight to a long, uninterrupted game of play.

But something had already put the thought into Maurice's mind, which was all too ready for it, that now there was a capital opportunity for going into the wood, and having a look at the tank alone.

Who can tell what made him think of being so naughty? Aye, who can detect all the arts and devices of Satan, our soul's enemy, to lead us astray? But when the thought was once in his mind he kept it there, instead of putting it away from him at once.

And all the while that he saw the horses being harnessed and put in, and while he rode round from the stables to the door, and while he helped everybody to get ready to start, and while he watched them drive away down the lawn, the trial was going on within—on one side his sense of duty and obedience, and on the other his naughty heart, his curiosity, his longing for adventure, and the carrying out his long cherished design.

"What harm can there be," he said to him-

self, "in just going in and out again? besides, no one will know, for how can they? It is a long time since I was forbidden. I am sure I am old enough now."

Yet he was not comfortable. He could not get over the fact that again and again he had been warned not to disobey. Yes, he well knew that it was very wrong, and so he thought, "I'll tell Helen nothing about it, but run while she is gone up-stairs, and before she comes out I'll be back."

He started off, and guilty fear added wings to his feet. He looked all about before climbing up to lift the latch of the tall iron gate, and half repented of what he was doing as it fell with a noise loud enough to tell the world, as it seemed to him, that he was disobeying his parents.

"Now that I'm here, I'll go," thought he, though he would gladly have been back again safe in the garden, and the load off his mind. He entered and listened; no sound fell upon his ear except the harsh cry of a jay in a distant copse, and the chirping note of a chaffinch high up among the boughs. Even the bird seemed to say to him "Better go back—go back." But no! the evil had got the mastery; the temptation was too strong; the trial was over; but the wrong side had won!

Poor little fellow! he had forgotten his past experience, and his father's advice to ask God for help when tempted to sin. So with a

frightened step, he again started and ran quickly through the firs in the direction of the tank.

Meanwhile his sister Helen, in high spirits, put on her hat and pelisse and gloves, dancing hither and thither in gleeful expectation of the fun they should have. She ran out of the hall door into the garden, calling "Maurice, Maurice," but no answer.

"He is gone to the tool-house," thought she; but he was not there. "Perhaps he's at the cucumber frame," and she ran to see. "Where can he have got to? I expect he's hiding;" but now she espied the iron gate half open. "Oh! can he have gone in there?" she exclaimed; "he knows he ought not!" She stood at the entrance and called, and then she thought of the tank. "Oh! what shall I do? I had better go and see if he really is there, and bring him away;" and quickly making up her mind, she too ran through the wood, as her brother had before, but with another kind of fear, fear for his safety. And her foreboding was not ill-grounded. For not very long afterwards the two children might have been seen tramping back through the wood, with their clothes dripping wet from every thread, and clinging close and heavy around them; and they passed hand in hand through the iron gate and along the garden paths to the house, the little one crying bitterly, and the eldest solemn, and pale, and silent. For what had happened? Before Helen had gone very far into the for-

sudden plantation, running fast, she saw Maurice standing by the edge of the tank, and looking in at the water. When he heard her approaching footsteps he turned quickly round to see who it was, and, startled at being caught in the act of doing wrong, his foot slipped, and falling backwards into the tank, he disappeared !

Oh ! what a moment for Helen. Her heart seemed to jump into her mouth. But her deep love for her little brother strained and tightened every nerve. She thought only of him, and, flying to the spot, plunged into the water after him for his rescue. The small boy's clothes bore him up, and Helen, brave girl ! found after a moment or two of struggling that she could stand. She then managed to lift him to the edge, and, with her timely help from behind, he at length scrambled up, and was on dry land once more.

But with poor Helen herself it was a much more difficult business. Her long clothes became so heavy when soaked with water, that with all her endeavours she could not raise herself upon the edge of the tank. There was only grass to lay hold of, and that kept breaking off, and the small boy, blinded with tears, and half choked with sobs and water that he had swallowed, could render no assistance. Another and another attempt she made, but slipped back every time with a souse into the now muddy water. Though she was fast losing strength and heart, her presence of mind did not forsake

her even then. At last she thought of telling Maurice to try and bend down a hazel bough that grew near, till she could reach it. He did so, and by its help she managed to get up upon her elbows, and inch by inch and by slow degrees she too at last stood safe upon the bank.

An hour afterwards both were sitting, dry and comfortable, one on each side of the fire, in the housekeeper's room. But how changed their holiday was! How little did they know what an hour might bring forth! And as they sat, they talked with spirits sobered by their late adventure.

"What made you think of going in there?" asked Helen; "I was hardly a minute upstairs."

"I thought you would not know," said Maurice.

"But it was very wrong," said she.

"I know that," he returned; "and I am very sorry now."

"Oh! I wish you had thought of that before. It's too late to think about a thing after it's done. You might have been drowned!"

"And so I should have been if it was not for you, Helen," said the small boy; "I'll try never to do anything wrong again, it's so bad afterwards."

"Oh, Maurice," said his sister, "we should never do wrong, just because it is wrong; no matter who knows about it. God sees it. We can't help being tempted, but we can help yielding, if he gives us strength."

"But, Helen, would God have prevented me going in there, if I had asked him?"

"Yes," said she.

"And will he forgive me now for going?"

"Yes," said she, decidedly, "if you pray to him."

Then, after a pause, the small boy said, "Helen, shall we pray to God to forgive me?"

And the brother and sister knelt together before the fire; and Maurice prayed to God to forgive them all their sins, and especially his sin that day, for Jesus Christ's sake.

And when they got up he said, "Helen, I love you so." And just as he was giving his sister a kiss, the door opened, and Mrs. Dudley the housekeeper came in.

She finding the children warm, and not much the worse for their adventure, allowed them to put on their things and go out into the sunshine again. "And I don't expect you'll pay the tank another visit, Master Maurice," she added.

And they had a happy day after all. And when the rest came home, and heard what had happened, they were thankful that Maurice's disobedience had not been punished more severely still; and when they saw how penitent the culprit was, there were more kisses than scoldings, although at first his kind father and mother looked very grave indeed.

CHAPTER III.

“PRIDE THAT DINES ON VANITY SUPS ON
CONTEMPT.”

As Maurice grew older his lessons were longer, as a matter of course, and many a trial he had over them. It is not worth while, however, to recount his early troubles in the schoolroom; but each young reader may imagine them to have been much like his own. But this it is but fair to say, that he worked hard in general to get his lessons over as soon as he possibly could.

Perhaps his motives for industry were not always the highest, for the chief reason why work should be done well when it is worth doing at all is, because God has told us whatever we do to do it heartily as unto him, not being slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving him. And besides, for children to redeem the time is to obey their parents and teachers, and that is right and well pleasing to God. But although Maurice thought of this sometimes, yet he generally wanted to run out to play as soon as he could. And he was not long in finding out that the quickest way to get out of school was to work hard while in.

True, he was becoming fonder of some of his lessons every day; and he had been known, indeed, to stay in at them after the clock had struck, and he had permission to go. But this was never the case with his French, and Mademoiselle had often to say to him, "Master Maurice, I am afraid you won't ride Raglan to-day." For Raglan was the pony's name, and he delighted in riding above all things.

As, however, it did not often happen that he was a naughty boy in school, when he had done his lessons, if Helen did not want him, off he would run to ask permission to have Raglan for an hour or so; and being allowed, he was soon in the stable getting the bridle, while Christopher put the saddle on, and in no time he was trotting down the drive in the greatest enjoyment.

Raglan, though now quiet and sedate, and sobered through the dignity of years, was once the property of the children's uncle, who was an officer in the army, and being a favourite in the barracks, the soldiers had taught him all manner of tricks; and every now and then he used to exhibit some of his accomplishments, to the discomfort and perplexity of the unwary rider.

The children and he, however, were the most intimate friends, and understood one another thoroughly. Almost the earliest thing they remembered was seeing Raglan in the dining-room, quietly eating apples off a plate which had been set upon the sideboard ready for

dessert. For being left standing at the front door, as he had been trained, but having been kept waiting too long for his patience, he had walked up the steps and across the hall unchallenged, and, finding such a feast laid out in the dining-room, was enjoying himself to his heart's content. There, however, he was soon discovered, and the alarm was raised.

He was exceedingly fond of going up steps, the more so if there was anything good to eat at the top of them; and once he was discovered in the granary, munching away at the oats very contentedly, though how he had got there no one was able to tell; but from which exalted position he had to be 'let down through the window by ropes.

One of his performances he was often called upon to go through for the amusement of the children, and that was the feat of picking up with his teeth from the ground any article that his rider desired. When Helen was mounted, she used to pretend to drop her handkerchief by accident, and Raglan would return it to her with the utmost politeness, and Maurice would in the same way recover his whip.

But though Raglan was usually so good-tempered and gentle, he would not put up with every kind of treatment, even from his friends. And once he was the means of teaching the small boy such a lesson as he did not soon forget.

And to go back quite to the beginning of the

story, this is how it happened. One day, at luncheon time, a gentleman called whom Mr. Guildford knew very well, and he was invited to join the party in the dining-room.

As Helen and Maurice sat quietly at the end of the table, and listened to the conversation, they heard him say that there was a family of gipsies in great distress at the corner of a common, about two miles off. "I was walking," said he, "along Faraway Lane, and just at the cross roads, at the corner of the common, there was a gipsy tent pitched, and two or three ragged children were sitting round the fire, over which hung, as usual, the pot suspended from three sticks. The children begged as I passed, but I gave them nothing, and walked on. When crossing the common, however, I spied something moving among the furze bushes, and on going to the spot, found a fellow, with a dog and ferret and nets, trying some of the rabbit holes. This would never do, so I told him that I should certainly give information to the keepers, for that he was poaching he knew quite as well as I.

" 'Yes, sir,' said the gipsy, 'I know I am poaching ; but if your children were starving, you would try to take a rabbit yourself.'

" 'What !' said I, thinking of the pot over the fire, 'do you mean to tell me that your children have nothing to eat ?'

" 'Will your honour come and see ?' said the man ; and gathering up his nets, he led the

way across the heather to the tent. When within hail he asked if 'mother had come home,' but she had not returned. 'She has gone,' said he, 'to try and sell a few clothes'-pegs, and to carry an armful of grass to the old horse. They took him to the pound the day afore yesterday, and hungry he is by now, I'll warrant. But if they want to get rid of us, that aint the way, I'm thinking, for I've no money to get him out, so here we must bide.'

"By this time we had reached the fire.

"'Turn out the pot,' said the gipsy to the eldest girl, 'and let the gentleman see our style of living; we shan't die of a surfeit, I'm thinking.'

"So the pot was emptied into a wooden bowl, and two turnips appeared, and a quantity of green stuff.

"'What's that?' said I, pointing to the latter.

"'That's nettles,' said the man; 'they're cheap, to be sure, but they aint much to keep the mill going. Not even a hedge-pig,' he added, contemplating the mess."

So far the children heard, having been listening eagerly to the gentleman's account. But now Mr. Guildford rose, and left the dining-room with his guest; and Helen and Maurice went on to the terrace, to confer on what they had heard.

"Oh!" began Helen, "did you hear what those gipsies had for dinner?"

"Yes," said her brother, "nettles and a hedge-pig."

"What's that?" asked she.

"Why, a hedgehog, of course; they're very good to eat."

"I shouldn't care to eat one, though. Oh, Maurice," said she, after a pause, "I should so like to give them something. I have a shilling and some halfpence in my box."

"I should like to give them something too. I've got sixpence. No, it wasn't a hedge-pig, it was turnips, they had," said Maurice.

"So it was. If you'll give your sixpence, Maurice, I'll give my shilling; and you take it to them, and tell me what they said. I can't go, I have to pay visits with mamma."

"All right," said Maurice, "I'll ride Raglan."

And off ran the one to get the money, and the other to see to the saddling and make preparations for the trip. These were not of a very lengthy nature, and before many minutes had elapsed Raglan and his rider were on their way to the common.

It was a hilly and rough road, and the pony did not care to move much faster than a walk; indeed, if he had not been of such a sober and steady disposition, it is not likely that the pair would have been trusted thus by themselves. So on went Maurice very quietly, until at a cross road he saw at a little distance two lads on horseback, coming in his direction, whom he

knew. They were the sons of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who was very rich, and the boys, who were both of them older than Maurice, were to be seen often riding about the country, sometimes following the hounds in the hunting season, and at other times, when at home for the holidays, amusing themselves in all kind of sports, some of which were not very creditable to them.

Mr. Guildford did not approve of Maurice being much in their society; but in the small boy's eyes they were heroes. He used to wonder at and delight in the tales they told of their adventures; and whilst he admired their prowess in what he considered their manly achievements, he longed to follow their bold example.

Now they came cantering up with their dogs, and cried out, "Hurrah, young un! Where are you off to? Come along with us, and we'll show you some fun."

"I am going to the common," said Maurice.

"To the common! and what are you going to do there? You had better come with us; we are going to have a rabbit hunt in Farmer Chubb's big field. We've sent on a boy with some rabbits in a bag, and he's been waiting there ever so long. So come. Gee up, Raglan."

Maurice hesitated. It was a great trial for him. He did not like to say on what errand he was bound, and he would so much like to see what they were going to do.

"We don't intend to stay here all the after-

noon, I can tell you," said one ; "so just touch up Raglan with your spur, and we shall be there in five minutes."

"No, I can't go," answered Maurice at last, regretfully.

"Well, be off to the common like a goose," and away they cantered, whistling and calling to their dogs, and laughing loudly at some rude joke which Maurice well knew was made at his expense.

"I'm glad I did not go with them after all," thought he, when the better resolve grew stronger within him, and the contents of the gipsies' pot came into his mind. "Papa doesn't like my riding with them either ;" and he shook Raglan's bridle, and trotted in the opposite direction, with a pleasant sense within of having done what was right.

The road soon became wider, with turf on each side, and opened out on to the common, and then Maurice espied the gipsy encampment not very far off. Riding up to it, he found the children crying, and the man came out of the tent, having heard the tread of the pony's feet.

Maurice did not know how to begin his message at first, but asked, "What makes them cry?" pointing to the ragged children.

The gipsy, turning towards them, said, "The young gent asks what makes you cry."

"Billy's sick," said the youngest.

"Billy's our brother," said another.

Just then the woman made her appearance,

having heard what was going on, and began, "Yes, my dear, the poor child is very ill, lying there on the straw; perhaps you'd like to see him."

"No, I thank you," said Maurice. "Have you got your horse out of the pound yet?"

"No," said the gipsy, looking surprised.

"And, my dear," said the woman, "you haven't a trifle you could give us to buy bread, have you?"

"Haven't you got any bread, then?" asked Maurice, feeling rather proud of his position, and of the money in his pocket, and liking the many curtsies and bows he was receiving from the gipsy woman and the children, who had now stopped crying.

"Bread, my dear, we haven't set our eyes on for days" (this wasn't true); "but we shall soon taste it again, if I'm not mistaken in the looks of your pretty face."

"Oh! please, sir, give a poor gipsy something, just a copper, sir," said a child, "and you won't feel it; just a copper. Oh! thank you, sir," as she saw the small boy's hand move towards his pockets.

He took out the shilling and sixpence, and gave it to the woman, and said, "There, that's all I have; I know you must be hungry," and, without waiting to receive the showers of blessings and thanks which were poured out upon him in a continuous stream of words, off he trotted across the heath, without once looking

back, and into the road again that led towards his home.

And not a little elated was he at what he had done. He began to consider himself a very great person indeed, riding about the country and dispensing charities with open hand, and he sat quite upright on Raglan, and felt like a lord at least. And then he began to think of the two boys he had met, and he held his whip as he had noticed one of them had held his, and he tried to make Raglan canter sideways as their ponies cantered when they were spurring them and yet holding them in quite tight. But Raglan did not seem up to what his master wanted. He went fast enough straight on, and when he was held in he stopped ; but this was not sufficient, he must canter sideways, and this he could not be made to do.

By-and-bye Raglan began to be out of temper with the urging, and beating, and stopping, and hastened home as fast as he was able. But a new idea had occurred to Maurice. He would get one of his father's spurs, and then he would be like a grown-up man, and then he would make Raglan canter sideways whether he liked it or no. But the worst of it was that this very thing he had been forbidden to do. His father had often told him never to use a spur for Raglan. "That's all nonsense," thought he, "it's because they thought that I could not ride him. Fancy my not being able to ride this stupid old fellow !" and he struck Raglan

with his whip, and galloped up the drive towards the stables.

So "familiarity breeds contempt," as the old proverb truly says; and soon, having reached down the spur and hidden it in his pocket, Raglan's head was turned away from the stable again, to his great disappointment, and to the aggravation of his ill-humour; and when his young master knew himself to be out of sight and fairly on the road to the common again, he jumped off and screwed on the spur. He then remounted with a military air, and proceeded to use it on Raglan's side. But no sooner did Mr. Raglan feel the first touch, than he was changed into a very different character from the quiet, good-tempered old fellow he usually was.

He had by no means forgotten the previous treatment to which he had been subjected; and his ambitious rider had never calculated on such a turning of the tables as then took place, and the result served him perfectly right for being so wrong and so foolish as to indulge his fancies, and to act contrary to his father's caution. Raglan in a moment jumped straight up, with all four feet off the ground; this jerked Maurice's feet out of the stirrups, and frightened him too much to hold on. Secondly, by putting his head between his fore legs, and kicking out behind, the small boy found himself in a furze bush in no time, from which, when he had by-and-bye picked himself up,

sadly scratched and bruised, but with no bones broken, Raglan was seen scampering over the common.

Very melancholy was the small boy, and very small did he seem to be in his own eyes, when, in doleful plight, he betook himself homeward on foot ; but chiefly his fears were for Raglan, well knowing his propensity to wander.

Maurice went straight to his father's library, and told him all the story of the spur with many tears ; but no Raglan had made his appearance. Christopher was sent to look for him, messengers were despatched in every quarter to describe the missing pony ; but evening came, and Raglan had not been recovered, and the children were in despair. Mr. Guildford thought that poor Maurice had already been sufficiently punished for his folly and vanity and disobedience ; and so indeed he had. That night he sobbed himself to sleep, for he feared he should never see Raglan again ; whom he gave up for lost.

The first thing in the morning he ran to the stable ; but the stall was empty, and with a very downcast countenance, a heavy heart, and but little appetite, he took his place at breakfast. And poor Helen was in no better spirits.

The day wore slowly away ; and when Helen asked her father at lunch, there was still no news of the truant. By-and-bye she started from her seat, and exclaimed, " Papa, I think I

hear the pony." And she was right. They all ran out to the yard, and sure enough Helen's quick ears had caught the sound of Raglan's feet upon the pitching.

Oh, what rejoicing there was between Helen and Maurice; how they patted and kissed the dear old pony, and how often did they assure him he never should be touched with a spur again. But who had brought Raglan home? "I caught him on the common, sir," said the man, "and I knew the young gent's pony again."

It was the gipsy. And Helen blushed and slipped behind her father when she heard him say, "One good turn deserves another, and it's right glad I am to do it for one who behaved so generous to me."

"What can you mean?" said Mr. Guildford; "I don't understand it at all."

The mystery was soon explained; and although the gipsy would not take any reward at first, he was not permitted to leave without some medicines and a dinner for his sick child, and money enough in his pocket to get his horse out of pound and himself and his family a good meal for a week to come.

"But, children," said Mr. Guildford, after the adventure had been thoroughly recounted, and Helen rewarded with a sweet kiss for her share in the transaction, "let this teach you this lesson for the future, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' Never will

your trials be heavier and more difficult to encounter, Maurice, than just after you think you have overcome them and are safe. Raglan will have taught you something you will always be thankful for, if he teaches you to remember this Christian motto, 'Never safe except when watching.' "

"I don't think I'll forget it in a hurry, papa," said the small boy.

CHAPTER IV.

“HE IS THE BEST MASTER WHO MASTERS HIMSELF.”

As time passed on and the small boy grew fast, he constantly begged to be allowed to go to school, as his brothers had before him; and although he knew well how greatly he would miss his rides upon Raglan, his rambles with Nero, and the freedom of his delightful home, still he longed to become a hero in some of those games and adventures to the accounts of which he listened with breathless interest and excited imagination. So at last when his dear mother told him one day that, if all were well, he would very likely be sent to school after Midsummer, he grew wild with delight.

For some time he could scarcely talk or think of anything else, and his numberless questions as to how far off the school was—how many boys there were in it—how many masters? and so on, without ceasing, made every one laugh; and his mother, to keep him quiet, told him that he would not be so glad to go to school a second time.

But as many weeks must yet pass before the long-wished-for day could arrive, I will tell you

in this chapter of a circumstance which quite put out of his head, for a time at least, all thoughts of his school. The 14th of May was the small boy's birthday, and what was it that was brought to the house on the evening before, carefully packed and plainly addressed to "Master Maurice Guildford," but the very thing that of all others he desired to possess—a beautiful, little, light rod for fly-fishing. It was of a size just suited to the strength of his arm, with reel and line complete, and a tiny book of flies, so carefully made, that his heart leapt within him for joy.

But who had sent him this delightful present; whom had he to thank for it; no one knew. He set his rod up to show Helen, and fished away on the lawn to try its capabilities; and told his father before breakfast, next morning, that it was the very best birthday present he had ever had, and did he know from whom it came?

Though his father was quite at a loss to satisfy his curiosity, there is no reason why the reader should not be told that the anonymous donor turned out to be his kind brother Gilbert; the truth of the matter being this, which is a secret, mind: When his brother was last at home he had been so terribly bored by the small boy's numerous entreaties to lend him his rod during his absence at Cambridge, that almost in self-defence he had seized this opportunity of gratifying his young brother's inclinations.

Maurice, you must know, was a fisherman almost from his birth, or at least from the very early days when he used to catch sticklebacks and tadpoles in his pocket handkerchief, and was by no means ignorant of many of the mysteries of the art. As, however, in some few places the stream was deep, he was not yet permitted to wander alone along its banks, and he gave his father no peace until he consented to accompany him to make real trial of his new possession.

On a bright Spring morning, therefore, with the wind blowing briskly enough from the south to make the cloud shadows chase one another swiftly over the meadows, the father and son set out, each fully equipped, and the latter eager to begin operations, and anxious to distinguish himself. They went together through the flowery fields to the river's bank, and for some distance followed its course up the stream intending to fish downwards on their return.

A walk of this description with his father Maurice enjoyed as much as the actual fishing; and no wonder, for there was not a bird or fish to be seen but Mr. Guildford knew its name and its habits, and all about it, and he could give such an interesting account of the flowers and insects and any rare or uncommon thing they met with in their rambles, that the children esteemed their father the most entertaining companion in the world.

And now their conversation was about the

water-rats, for they had just heard one pop down among the reeds, and had spied it swimming swiftly beneath the surface of the stream, when it rose and glided along to the opposite bank, where it soon was hidden amongst the long grasses that concealed its hole of refuge.

"It is more like a beaver than a rat," remarked Mr. Guildford, "as its teeth show. But see there ; stoop down, and look at that heron making its morning meal ;" but before he could get out his pocket telescope, which he always carried to enable him to observe any such object with closer accuracy, the noble bird slowly rose on its wide wings, and with heavy flight took its course up the river before them.

"See, papa," said Maurice, "how he uses his long legs as a rudder to guide him through the air ; and when he is standing he is like a fellow on stilts. But did you see that great fish jump ; and there goes a kingfisher, and another rise. What a jolly day for fishing ! I am so glad some one gave me a rod on my birthday ;" and so the happy fellow chatted away, enjoying himself to the utmost.

"Thank God, my boy," said his father by-and-by, "who made this world so beautiful, that we might learn to look up to him the Maker ; and then he repeated Milton's words—

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good ;
Almighty ! thine this universal frame
Thus wondrous fair ; thyself, how wondrous then !
Unspeakable, thou sitt'st above these heaven"

To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

"Papa," said Maurice, after a pause, "on such a morning as this I feel as if I couldn't do wrong, for God seems so near, and everything is so beautiful;" but his father only replied, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation, my boy;" as Maurice remembered afterwards.

A quarter of an hour's walking brought them to a rustic bridge, and a noisy waterfall overhung with bushes and straggling boughs, and from that point they proposed to begin their fishing down the stream. There they now set up their rods, and Maurice watched his father throw his flies on the broken water just under the fall.

"You are sure of one of them, papa," said he; but almost before the words were out of his mouth, a fine trout rose at the enticing bait, so natural as it looked dancing on the tiny waves, a speckled handsome fellow, pink and silvery, as he jumped out of the clear water and glanced in the sunlight and pulled hard on the line, but, no, it was gone! what a disappointment!

"Oh, papa, you have lost him," cried Maurice; "I thought you were sure of him, after such a rise as that. How vexed I am."

"Do not be vexed," said his father, "a fisherman must learn patience. We must fish carefully to-day, as the sun is so bright and the water so clear. But do you go on, and try

your skill farther down ; I daresay I may see the very same trout again, or some of his friends in this pool."

So away ran Maurice to try his new rod in eager haste, and soon found a suitable place to begin. It was where the stream made a rapid turn, and ran gurgling and sparkling over a pebbly shoal, at the bottom of which a log had fallen half across the channel, causing the water to twirl, as it rounded the obstruction on its downward rush to the quiet depth below. Here it was not unlikely that a trout might be lying. And this, as it proved, was the case.

A fat greedy fellow was watching the fall of water from his cool retreat, for any worms or insects that might be carried away by the current and become his prey. Just then down came Maurice's brown fly. Twice he had thrown it unsuccessfully, but the third time it had fallen in the middle of the stream and was irresistible to Mr. Trout.

As it floated swiftly along, that fly, thought he, must be mine, and at it he dashed without a moment's hesitation. His silver side and the flash of his tail was plainly to be seen as the reel whirled round, and the new rod was bent like a willow wand. "I've got him," gasped the small boy, trembling with excitement, and after a moment all was still. He began to wind up his line, and to try to moor the fish lower down to the shallow water ; but the moment that he pulled, up sprang the trout a foot above

the surface, and down again and backwards and forwards, puzzling his captor not a little. Still he kept his line tight, and by degrees, like a skilful fisherman, he brought his fish gradually towards the bank, where he hoped to make the prize secure. Nearer and nearer the shallow water he drew him, after every rush, and now he could see what a splendid fellow he was.

He selected the spot for the landing, but the line caught in a bit of wood. "I will go in after him," thought he; so taking the line in his hand he stepped into the water, and put down his hand to take up the fish. He touched it, but before he could get firm hold, by a vigorous spring, the trout managed to snap the line off just where it was hitched in the root, and was gone in a moment.

The poor little fellow who had made so sure of his prize was unable to believe his eyes. "Oh, I've lost it," he groaned at last, "it's gone, such a beautiful fish;" and then he burst into tears. Indeed, such a bitter disappointment might have tried the self-command of an older fisherman than he. But then, alas! his temper got the mastery over him. "That nasty, nasty root," he said, "to break my line;" and taking up his rod he jerked it back to disentangle it by force, but it would not free itself. So then he threw it on the ground in his passion, and stamped about half blind with rage and sobbing.

Is this the same small boy who said so confidently a little time ago that he felt he couldn't

do wrong on such a beautiful day, for God seemed so near? Alas! alas! he had no thoughts of God, or of the calm sweet beauties of nature now. How true it is that "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

The evil that lurked within while the surface was so fair had now the rule, and a sad sight it was! For now he lost all control over himself; and, stamping about, carried away by his passion, he put his foot upon his new rod as it lay, and broke it in two pieces at the middle.

"Oh, what have I done!" he cried again, and rolled himself about in despair; then, snatching one end, he beat it on the ground as a new fit of rage seized him.

His father now saw him from a distance, and could not conceive what the matter was.

"What is it? what is it?" he shouted. "Is it an adder? has it bitten you?" Ah! his passion was like a deadly serpent which he had nursed in his bosom, and which had bitten him cruelly indeed!

But when his father came running up, the miserable boy hid his face from him in shame and disgrace. It was a long time before the truth could be learned; but when at length it was gasped out, in broken syllables, "I lost a fish!" then, to his unspeakable sorrow, Mr. Guildford understood how deeply his child had fallen into sudden sin.

And when the poor lad grew calmer, and was able to listen to what was said, his father spoke every

gravely indeed to him. He showed what an awful thing it was to lose all mastery over oneself, and to let an evil passion be master. “‘He that hath no rule over his own spirit,’” he said, “‘is like a city that is broken down, and without walls,’ because every evil thing can enter the heart and dwell there: then every trial becomes a fall, every temptation a sin. Once give the reins to your anger, Maurice, and, like an unruly horse, it will surely run away with you, and perhaps do great mischief. Curb it in with all your might before it becomes too headstrong, and call upon God for greater strength, so ‘sin shall not have dominion over you.’ And may God now forgive you, for the Saviour’s sake. We must, of course, go home; and your broken rod will keep this sad day in mind for a long time.”

Yes, it was a sad day for Maurice, so happily begun though it was! It was a bitter remembrance and warning, too, whenever he felt the hasty rising and swelling of angry passions within.

CHAPTER V.

“OUT OF DEBT, OUT OF DANGER.”

At last the long-looked-for day arrived when Maurice left his home for the first time for school. He was too much excited to eat any breakfast that morning ; and as his father drove to the little town by the sea, where the school was to which he was going, he asked at every village they passed through whether they had arrived or not, and how much farther it still could be.

The carriage in which they rode was a phaeton drawn by one horse, with just room for three persons, so that when Maurice was mounted in the little seat behind, and his father and mother in front, and the school box stowed away underneath, they were all packed in very comfortably.

But poor Helen's long face was a sight to behold when she understood that there was no place for her, and that she must see the last of her brother from the hall door steps. I am not sure that two or three tears did not steal down her cheeks, and drop into her plate as she held down her head, whilst the plan was discussed

at breakfast, and settled with no thought of the little girl, who wished to accompany the party to Beckmouth.

But Maurice was not so much excited with expectations as to think only of himself; and he suddenly cried out, "Oh, papa, Helen would like to go. See, she wants to go. Please let Helen go too; if there is not room in the phaeton, may she ride Raglan by our side? And a sweet smile from Helen's tearful face beamed across the table and rewarded the thought.

So thus it was settled, and so they set out, and drove through the pleasant lanes down to the sea; and Helen sometimes cantered in front, and sometimes trotted by her brother's side, and exchanged many laughing words, and was only sad when she remembered that many weeks must pass before she would see him again. So for her the distance was too soon accomplished; but not too soon for Maurice's impatience to enter upon the varied experiences of schoolboy life.

And yet, when the carriage drove up to the door of a high, red-brick house, that seemed to have the word "school" in large letters upon every brick and every window of it, the small boy's heart beat fast, and failed him a little. He spied a row of heads just appearing above the painted part of one of the windows, and then he put on a manly air; but when a single larger head took up the position, he pretended

to see if the harness was all right on the other side of the horse.

While his father and mother went in, he bid Helen good-bye at least twenty times ; and if he had not thought that some one was looking from the window, he would have kissed her and Raglan too. But by-and-by, at parting, the window was quite forgotten, and he kissed her and his father and mother again and again. And when the pony's head was turned away, and the carriage began to move from the door and leave him standing there alone, a bitter sense of desertion and dreary loneliness came over him, and the little fellow sobbed as if his heart would break.

Just then a voice, which seemed to come from some window above, reached his ears. "I say, young un, is that your sister on the pony?" But this piece of inquisitiveness Maurice pretended not to hear ; and, wiping his eyes as well as he could, he waved his good-bye until they turned the corner. And the small boy was at school !

"So there you are, my little fellow," said some one coming out of the house, and whom Maurice rightly guessed was Dr. Derby ; "some boys are going to have a run on the beach before dinner, perhaps you would like to join them. Here, Coventry, is a new companion, who would like to go down to the sea ; take him with you, and take care of him." Where-upon a boy, taller and older than Maurice,

stepped forward, and said, "Will you come with us? we will show the way to the beach."

"New arrival," said another, running out. "What's your name? Who's your father? Where do you live? How old are you? Been at school before?" And so on, till the poor small boy was so bewildered with questions, that he had reached the beach almost before he knew where he was. But the volley of interrogations having been fired off, and replied to as effectively as was possible under the circumstances, the new arrival was left to himself to watch the crisp, amber-coloured waves as they came curling in, and breaking themselves on the shining shingle, and to pick up bits of sea-weed and bright stones that seemed to be jasper, or agate, or chalcedony, at least just after the hissing wave had left them, but which, when dry, turned out to be such dull, uninteresting pebbles, that the small boy could scarcely believe they were the same.

"I hate this stupid beach," said one of his companions, at length; "let us go up to mother's, there's nothing to do here. Come on, you, what's your name: have you got any money?"

The small boy did not say how much rather he would remain where he was, for the fishing boats were fast coming in with last night's haul of fish; but he answered that he had sixpence in his pocket, and more in his desk. At the same time he much wondered who "mother"

was, having as yet only known one to whom he was wont to apply that honoured title, and she was now miles away. He followed his new companions to a small pastrycook's shop, and was further surprised at the very intimate terms on which they appeared to be with the woman that kept it. He thought it strange, too, that the boys should want to buy things to eat just before dinner.

He was but a small boy, you know, and was not experienced in the habits of fellows of a certain age, who, when at their first school, and sometimes afterwards, spend all their pocket-money in sweets. Being never accustomed to think about his eating when at home, except at meal time, and during the fruit season in the garden, perhaps, he could not understand this buying at a pastrycook's shop. Not so the others.

"Halloa, mother," cried one, "you've got some new chocolate creams; that is jolly, won't I have some of them."

"Well, sir," said the woman, "you know what I told you, and the creams are a penny apiece. You may be sure that I'll be as good as my word."

"All right, mother, don't be cross. What will you have, small boy?" added he patronisingly, and looking down from his superior height of an inch or two.

"Thank you," said Maurice, "I'm not hungry."





AT THE PASTRYCOOK'S.

"Hungry," rejoined the other, "perhaps not, but you must be a screw if you don't want something."

"Well, I'll have a bottle of lemonade then, as I'm rather thirsty."

"Lemonade, why that's sixpence!" exclaimed the boys in a breath; for such a reckless expenditure betrayed the small boy's inexperience in their eyes.

"Well, Master Coventry," said mother, "suppose that it is sixpence, it will be paid for no doubt," with great emphasis on the word "paid," which brought a flush into Coventry's face. He helped to finish the lemonade, however, and "mother" pressed Maurice the while to buy first one sort of sweetmeat and then another, but to all her suggestions he made the same reply: "No, I thank you, I have no more money with me."

At last she took down the chocolate creams. "Oh," cried Coventry, "have some of them, they are jolly; they're the best things 'mother's' got, ain't they, Denbigh?"

"But I haven't any more money," said the small boy again.

"That's no difference, mother will trust you; won't you, mother, trust him? he's a new fellow, and has got some money at home in his desk."

"I'll put it down against your name, and you can pay me when you like. I'm not pressing, am I, Master Coventry?"

"No," said he, "mother is very good, I must

say, for that. Let her put you down half a dozen," said he, to Maurice, privately, "it's only sixpence, you know, and you can pay any time. I should like one so much ; they are good, those chocolate creams are."

Now this was a great trial to Maurice. It was but a little sum, was it not ? only sixpence ; and besides, he thought, Coventry wants to have one, and I shall be thought mean. Perhaps the boys will like me better, if I do and I am quite a stranger among them.

Such things ran through his mind in less than a minute ; but there was another side of the question, and he had to consider that also, of which deliberation the result was that he said, "I'd rather not have my name put down ; but I'll buy some afterwards, when I come down again."

"Oh, I dare say," exclaimed Coventry angrily. "A fine way that of getting off, because you're a screw. It will be a precious long time before I ask you to do anything for me again. Come on, Denbigh, we shall be late for dinner ;" so off the two ran, leaving Maurice in the shop to find his way home by himself.

"Well, my dear," said mother, "you are quite right to pay for what you buy, and I only wish that the others would do the same. I should lose my custom if I did not trust them ; but I think that Master Coventry has not behaved right in leaving you to find your way up alone, and you a new boy. He owes me near ten

shillings, he does; and I don't believe I shall ever get the money unless I speak to Dr. Derby about it. Here, Bill," cried she, looking into the house, "come and show this young gent the way up to school, or he'll be late for his dinner. Here's a cream for you, my dear," added she, "and I daresay I shall see you again before long."

So off she packed her son, who said to Maurice, "Better run, sir, as the first bell's gone, or you'll be late." So the small boy ran, greatly pondering in his mind the events of the last few minutes.

But now let me tell you why it was that Maurice was so determined in this, which seems a very simple matter, and one in which he could scarcely have been blamed even had he yielded. His reason was just this—a fear of running into debt; and what could the small boy know about debts, you may ask? I will tell you.

When his brother Gilbert was at home he took his young brother's lessons in hand, and one day had set his pupil this copy to write: "Experientia docet," who, having carefully got to the end of his second line, looked up and asked, what does "Experientia docet" mean? "'Experientia'" is the name of my cane," said the master, pretending to be very stern. "So finish your copy without a blot or mistake, or you will soon discover the meaning of 'docet.'"

He was in the depths of a mathematical problem, and did not like the interruption.

After lessons were over, however, and the two had rambled together through the garden, and into the fields at the back of the house, and were sitting on a gate enjoying the view and a fresh breeze that blew up the valley from over the sea, "Now," said Gilbert, "I will tell you the meaning of the copy I set."

"You said '*experientia*' was the name of your cane," said the small boy, laughing.

"Well, sir; and does not the cane teach when nothing else will?" said he, with the air of a preceptor; "and so '*experientia docet*:' experience teaches the wisdom of many things that some folk will never learn in any other way." And then he added more gravely, "'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:' but afterwards it yields good fruit. Yes, you will have to buy your share of experience in your time; and I only hope you will not have to pay so dearly for it as I had to pay for some of mine."

"Tell us about it," said the small boy.

His brother smiled; but said, "Well, I will tell you of something that happened when I was a schoolboy; but you don't know what a schoolboy is yet, do you?" Whereupon Maurice pummelled his brother's shoulder.

"Well, when I was a schoolboy I was foolish enough to get into debt; I owed more money than I was able to pay, and the trouble of that debt was an experience sharp enough to last me for many a long day. That experience, so dearly

bought and yet so useful, has made me resolve never to owe money again, if I can avoid doing so by any possible means. Now, as you will be a schoolboy soon, you will thank me, if by my experience you learn always to give up a thing, rather than to owe money for it. Some boys will laugh, I know, and perhaps you may be put to inconvenience ; but try to remember your copy this morning, it may help you to be firm, and then it will prove the best morning's lesson you have learnt for a long time. But hark, it is one o'clock, and they will be looking for us ;" so the two brothers jumped off the gate, and ran down to the house. But the small boy did not forget this talk with his brother Gilbert, and the line in his copy book impressed it on his memory ; and it was strange that on the very first day of his school life he should be called upon to test the strength of his resolution never to owe money. But so it was.

And he was firm, and the circumstance only served to make his resolution the firmer. At the same time he was as generous and kind-hearted a little fellow as any in the school. And this his companions were not long in finding out.

CHAPTER VI.

“CLOUDY MORNINGS OFTEN BRING CLEAR
EVENINGS.”

It so happened that after Maurice had been left alone in the shop so unkindly by his new companions on the morning of his arrival at school, that Dr. Derby saw them running up in order to be in time for dinner, and asked where their new schoolfellow was.

“He has stopped behind at mother’s, sir,” said Coventry.

“Does he know his way home, then?”

“I suppose so, sir,” was the answer.

“But, Coventry, I left him in your charge,” returned the doctor; “and you say ‘you suppose’ he knows his way! This is not acting rightly and kindly, or doing as you would be done by. It is exceedingly probable that he does not know his way. Go then, sir, and look for him at once.”

But before Coventry turned to stroll sulkily down the street again, Maurice had entered by another door, and was just about to follow the rest in to dinner, when Denbigh ran up, knowing that the doctor would question him in a minute, and said, “Hold your tongue, Maurice, about our leaving you!”

Thereupon another boy, hearing part only of what Denbigh whispered to Maurice, jumped to a hasty conclusion, and before dinner had begun the piece of intelligence was passed round from boy to boy, that the new fellow's name was Moss.

"Why, there you are," said the doctor; "when did you come in?"

"Just after the others, sir," said Maurice.

"Did Coventry leave you to find your way up by yourself?"

"Only a minute, sir; I ran up after him."

"He should not have left you at all," said the doctor; "and he will lose part of his dinner, at all events, for I have sent him to look for you."

"Oh! if you please, sir, may I run and overtake him and bring him back?" asked Maurice.

"No," said the doctor; "begin your dinner."

The meal was soon finished, but Coventry did not make his appearance. It seems that he sauntered down to mother's and looked in through the window, and, seeing the shop empty, supposed that Maurice had gone up the other street, which led in an opposite direction almost from the school.

So on he walked, asking people if they had seen such a boy pass that way. Then it struck him that he might have gone round by the beach. So back he went to the school, and

inquired of a servant if the new boy had come home yet, and learning that he was in the school-room ran thither to find not Maurice, but Dr. Derby standing at the window talking with another boy whom he had not seen before, but who was not a bit like the one he was in search of.

So he was obliged to go up to the doctor and say, "If you please, sir, I cannot find the new boy anywhere."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "did you not say that he stayed behind at the pastrycook's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then wait a moment until I come." So saying the doctor left the school-room, but had not been absent many minutes before he again returned, and said, "You have not been speaking the exact truth, Coventry. The lad did not stay behind, but you ran away and left him at the shop. Go into my study, where I will speak with you again on this matter."

"If that new fellow hasn't been blabbing," thought Coventry; "won't I pay him out? the sneak!"

And now the boys came rushing out from dinner, all in the highest spirits, for that afternoon was a half-holiday.

"Where's Coventry?" said they. "Tell us, Moss, you new fellow."

"What is it, Denbigh?" said another.

"Why," said Denbigh, "he wouldn't have his name put down for some chocolate at mother's,

and Coventry ran off and left him to find his way home by himself."

"What!" cried another, "hasn't the new fellow any money?"

"I don't mind paying," said Maurice; "but I don't want my name put down."

"No, I should think not," said one, "such a name as Mossy!" at which there was a general laugh.

"My name is not Mossy," said Maurice.

"Oh, I daresay; here's a new fellow ashamed of his name."

"Oh, there's mother," they cried; "oughtn't Moss to treat us, as he's ashamed of his name?"

"Yes; come, Moss, draw out of the bank."

So they all gathered round, for on half-holidays "mother" was allowed to enter the playground; and Maurice treated his companions to the contents of her basket.

Poor little fellow! he did not mind that in the least, but he did not like being laughed at; and it was all so new and strange to him. He spent all the money he had, and gave away all the sweets, and then the boys began to leave him to himself.

Off they went in parties, some to the beach, some into the fields and woods; and at last he was left alone in the playground. He sat down on a bench, and felt very miserable indeed. Through doing what he thought was right he had got another boy into trouble. He had given away all his money, and no one cared to speak

to him. And as he sat lonely in the silent, dusty playground, he sobbed bitterly.

The lovely summer's afternoon wore away, and he had not a friend near, having just left his happy home, and Helen, and Raglan, and the bright garden with its flowers, and the plantations, and the river that he loved; and he said aloud to himself, "I never thought that school was like this."

He watched the swallows high up in the blue sky; he stood upon the bench, and saw a white sail far off upon the sea, of which he could catch a glimpse between some houses. He watched the white sail until it disappeared behind the house, and then sitting down upon the bench again, he sighed, and said, "If I were a swallow, I'd fly away home."

After a weary, heavy time, he heard a step approaching, and, looking towards the door, saw Coventry enter the playground; and he jumped up and ran to him, saying, "I'm so sorry you were sent to look for me; where have you been? have you had any dinner?"

"You horrid little sneak!" said Coventry, "I hate the sight of you. If you come near me I'll box your ears; and won't I give it you by-and-by?"

"Why, what makes you angry?" said Maurice, much surprised; "I am sure I ——"

"Didn't you tell tales to the doctor?" interrupted the other. "And as you will come where you're not wanted, take that." And he

struck the small boy smartly on the face, and passed on, leaving him burying his head in his hands with shame and grief, and sobbing still more bitterly, in a more forlorn and miserable condition than before. How long he would have stood thus, with his heart ready to break, I do not know; but he was roused by a voice behind him, saying, "You seem in a bad way."

Maurice turned, and saw through his tears that the speaker was a lad a good deal older and taller than himself, whom he did not remember to have seen with the rest. He had rather a heavy look, but not an unpleasant one, in his face; and now, standing before the small boy with his hands in his pockets, said again, "You seem in a bad way; what has happened?"

"Coventry says I've been telling tales to the doctor, and I haven't."

"Is Coventry that boy just gone out?"

"Yes," said Maurice; "don't you know?"

"How should I?" said the other, "I've only just come."

"I only came this morning, though it seems longer," said the poor little fellow.

"Well, don't be down in the mouth! Is it you they call Moss?"

"Yes; I don't know why."

"Why shouldn't they, it's a very good name; I like it. I shall call you Moss. At my last school I was called 'The Gaul.' I'll tell you why, if you'll not laugh, and walk with me down to the shore. How is it you're all alone?"

Maurice recounted all his troubles, on which, however, the other made no comment; but by the time his story was finished, and they were in view of the sea, he said,

“I like a cutter better than a schooner; don’t you?”

Maurice said he didn’t know the difference, whereupon his companion began to explain the various rigs of the vessels in sight; and he did so in such an entertaining manner, and ended by drawing a whole number of ships upon the sand to illustrate his descriptions, that long before he finished, all the clouds had vanished from the small boy’s face, and he was almost as bright and happy as he was melancholy before.

“You have not told me why they called you ‘The Gaul,’” he said at length.

“I don’t think I shall tell you,” said the other: “you’ll go letting it out, and I shall never hear the end of it.”

After solemn protestations of secrecy, however, he proceeded.

“You must know that when I went to school first I was younger and smaller than you, and knew very little. Indeed I was awfully backward, I had only began *Delectus* and *Arnold* and that kind of thing, (“Oh,” thought the small boy, “what will he think of me?”) and the master, to see what I knew, put me on in the first bit of *Cæsar*, before the whole school. I had never read it before in my life; and how do you think I construed? I was awfully shy,

you know; I didn't know what I was saying. 'Gallia omnis,' every Gaul: 'est divisa,' is divided; 'in partes tres,' into three parts. Oh! how every one shouted! I never shall forget it! how they teased me! and I was named 'The Gaul' from that time forth, and no wonder!"

And then he fell a talking about his old school, and telling stories so amusingly that Maurice was sorry indeed when the time came for them to go back again to the red-brick house.

The boys were all in the playground when they returned, and on their entering, some one cried out, "There is Moss, the sneak!"

The blood flushed into Maurice's face, and he said aloud,

"I am not a sneak; and it's only Coventry that says so."

Whereupon Coventry came up with a sneer, and said, "Who told the doctor about your being left alone in mother's? it wasn't Denbigh."

"If that's all," Lichfield said, for that was "the Gaul's" real name, "I can easily tell you how Doctor Derby knew about what took place at the shop. I saw him ask mother himself from the window when he went out, and left Coventry and me in the schoolroom, for she came into the playground just at that moment. And if I were you, Coventry, I wouldn't hit such a small boy in the face as hard as you hit Moss this afternoon, especially a young un just from home. I happened to see that, too, from the window."

"I did not know certainly that we had a spy among us," retorted Coventry. "I say," added he, looking round, "a nice pair of new fellows as an addition to our happy family, eh! Perhaps, Mr. Lichfield, you intend to act your protégé's part of informer as well as spy, and acquaint the doctor with this cruel case of bullying. You're taking your line early, you two; that's certain!"

But this sarcasm and taunt quite failed of its intended effect, for Lichfield only laughed good-humouredly, and said, "Oh, no! If I thought that a licking would do such a one as you any good, I shouldn't trouble the doctor to give it you." At which the boys laughed and the little ones cheered, for now they knew that Coventry, the bully, had met with more than his match.

And then they gathered round Maurice, and asked what he had been doing all the afternoon, and told him where they had been, and one took him off to show him his rabbits; and when the great bell rang he went into tea in high spirits, and after tea the doctor said, "No lessons to-day, my boy, we'll begin to-morrow; you must make yourself at home to-day;" and Newport, the boy who kept rabbits, was allowed to go out and play with him. And so when bedtime came Maurice began to think that school was not such a disagreeable place after all as he had imagined it was at first.

CHAPTER VII.

“IF THE BRAIN SOWS NOT CORN, IT PLANTS
THISTLES.”

MAURICE'S sleeping apartment was shared at first by a young man named Julius and his dog Punch. Julius Leigh was now no longer a schoolboy, but he was preparing to enter college in a few weeks' time, and as he was a great favourite among the boys, and Punch no less so, Maurice was considered a fortunate fellow in being put into Julius's room. As, however, Julius seldom retired to rest until long after the small boy was in a sound state of oblivion, and as the latter was obliged to rise earlier than it suited the other's convenience, Punch was his chief companion. Now Punch was always in a playful humour of mornings, and his manifold tricks were just after Maurice's taste, so long as they did not become too boisterous, and excite the wrath of the sleeping magnate, his master. For the small boy soon began to share Punch's alarm at the growing dexterity exhibited by Julius in the art of throwing slippers and his accuracy of aim; and the worst of it was, that Punch would always bring his master the slippers

back again, even though they had been aimed at himself—a mark of most abject submission, and always a source of merriment to his play-mate, so long as he was not the offender.

But Julius was a very kind-hearted fellow ; and besides being kindhearted, he was one who always tried to walk with the fear of God before his eyes, and he was not ashamed of his Christian profession ; and his custom was, after his morning game of play with Maurice and Punch (when he was not too sleepy), to say, “ Now, Maurice, the bell will ring soon, and you must have a quiet time, so I and Punch are going to sleep again. Punch, go up on the chair.” And Punch would obey in a moment, and curl himself round, and would scarcely wink his eyes after his master’s orders to be still.

And then Maurice, having read in a little textbook which his dear mother had given him, would kneel by his bedside and pray.

Ah ! how often it is the case, as some of my young readers may testify, that, when a small boy leaves his home for school for the first time, a home where he has been taught to perform his religious duties regularly, to ask God in prayer for needful things, and to order himself as a Christian child should towards his Father in heaven, he meets with severe trials from ungodly companions on that account ; and also, alas ! how often it is that, after a short struggle, the good habits are broken off, and forgetfulness of God ensues. Through God’s

mercy our young friend Maurice was not at first tried in this way ; I say not at first, because afterwards he had to battle for the right, as all those have who would be true soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And how happy and light-hearted he used to be in those early days of his school life ! And this is why I think it was chiefly : it was because God was very good to him in giving him two such friends as Lichfield and Julius.

For instance, poor little Needham said to Maurice one day, "Oh, Moss, don't I wish I slept with you in your jolly room. Those fellows Coventry and Oakham make me hate to go to bed ; they talk such horrid stuff, and Coventry uses such bad words and knocks me about so ; I never get a moment's peace. You don't know how fortunate you are in knowing Julius Leigh ! I don't know any big fellow."

It was little, however, that the small boy had to do with Lichfield or Julius, except having a friendly word or two on meeting with the former now and then, and with the latter in his room ; for Lichfield joined a small class of upper boys who worked in the doctor's study, and Julius was independent of the school altogether. Therefore Maurice had to make his own way, although certainly he was much favoured by circumstances, and school-life was all the happier to him the while. And when his schoolfellows came to know him better, they liked him the more. His knowledge of natural history, his

fondness for a country life, and his experience in a country boy's amusements, made him always a welcome companion, and being very good-humoured and ready for any piece of fun, he was fast becoming popular.

But boys are not sent to school only to learn cricket and football, and to make up schemes and plans for half-holidays, although sometimes they seem to think that their fathers and mothers pay all the money for that purpose and no other. Now, Maurice began to be one of those idle little fellows who think of nothing else all day long but what they intend doing when they get out of school.

So busy was he with the number of friends he had, in sharing their occupations, in giving advice, in learning games, in telling stories, in helping, in planning, in speculating, that the school was soon his little world. He had not a thought beyond it; his home was almost forgotten, and his father, and mother, and Helen, and Raglan, and Nero, so wrapped up did he quickly become in the enjoyment of his play hours. He very seldom wrote home, but kept putting the duty off from day to day, and so the time slipped by, and although his conscience smote him very often, yet he almost always found excuse to deaden it. The fine weather, he thought, was against staying in doors writing; I will wait till a wet day comes. But it was now the autumn, and wet days came very seldom; nutting and blackberrying expeditions were

formed for half-holidays, and great was the rivalry between the various parties as to which should prove the most successful foragers. Different games took their course, each more exciting than the last apparently, while its popularity lasted; whilst the sea, and the beach, and the boats, and the fishermen were always objects of interest to Maurice when everything else failed. The result of all of which was, that one beautiful Wednesday afternoon, when the boys were dispersing hither and thither, the elder ones to cricket, and the others either to the fields and the woods, or to the beach and the little harbour at the mouth of the river Beck, where perhaps there was a newly arrived vessel to be criticised, or Newton, the fisherman, in a good humour, and ready to tell tales about smugglers, Maurice was sitting in the school-room, with his head on the edge of the desk, sobbing. Two other boys were there, one laughing at Maurice, and the other sulky and looking out of the window. The three had to spend their half-holiday in writing impositions, and their names had been sent up to the doctor.

Deal, the sulky one, was the butt of the school, though he was quite unconscious of it. Truro, the other, had wits if he chose to use them, but was acknowledged on all hands to be the laziest, most careless, and good-for-nothing fellow in the lower forms. His constant punishments did not alter him for the better in the least; and now he was jeering at Maurice, who

was overwhelmed with shame at being found in such company and in such a disgraceful position. But Maurice knew that the punishment was well deserved; he could not hide from himself that for some time past he had been going on badly. He had neglected his lessons; his mind wandered to other things whilst in school; his exercises had been hurried over; his work was scamped, as one of the masters expressed it, that he might be the sooner out of doors at play. And now it had come to this! How he despised himself that he had been so foolish; his chief fear was lest the doctor should tell his parents how idle he had been. And he sat and sobbed, and Truro laughed at him.

"I say, Timber," said Truro to Deal, making bad puns, which the other never noticed, "this Moss is a deal more penitent than you. You are so well seasoned, you are as hard as any board. There's no screwing a tear out of you. Now I'm dissolved in 'em," mocking the small boy. "Poor dear, now don't take on so. It's the first time, you see, and he misses his holiday, sweet lamb! But as for that Boards over there, he has no more feeling than the floor."

"If you call me names, I'll lick you," said Deal, who was almost twice Truro's size.

"Lo! the Board has made a sign. I shall henceforth call him Sign-board," said the incorrigible Truro. At which Deal made a rush at him; but Truro, suddenly upsetting the form, rolled Maurice on the floor, and Deal tumbled

over him, to Truro's intense satisfaction, who screamed with laughter as he escaped to the other side of the desks.

But soon he came up with well-feigned alarm and concern in his face, and assisted Deal to rise, and assured him with such apparent sincerity of his regret at the quite unintentional accident, that Deal, though half mistrusting, let him escape.

And then he began to tease Maurice again, whose temper at length showed signs of rising; but he was able to govern it by a strong effort, remembering past experience. He bethought himself that he deserved to be laughed at, for such lamentations made matters no better, and the best proof of sorrow was amendment in the future. So he dried his eyes, and could not resist laughing at Truro's description of Deal's face when he was falling. And then he set to work at his imposition, mentally resolving that a long time should pass before he spent such another half holiday as this.

Yes, so he resolved; but the temptations to idle were very many and very strong at first, and he yielded sometimes; victory, however, was generally on the side of diligence, and duty, and happiness as well.

And there was another inducement for turning over a new leaf, which was this: when the doctor called for him into the study, he said, "I am very sorry to see your name, Guildford; but the results of your few first weeks' trial at

school are far from satisfactory. By the bye, have you not a brother named Gilbert?"

"Yes, sir," said Maurice.

"I thought so; and I see his name in the newspaper as being the first man of his year at his college, and he has carried off a cup, and a prize of books as well. What a difference in your two positions to-day! He has been sowing corn and reaping the fruits, while you have been planting thistles to your disgrace."

Maurice burst into tears; and then the doctor added kind words of advice and encouragement. "This is the first time," said he, "that you have been reported; try now and let it be the last; try, with God's help."

And Maurice left the study with mingled feelings. I don't know which was the stronger—a desire to excel and win honours as Gilbert had, or a dread of disgrace like the present. "I will try," said he to himself; "I will work, and I'll win too, see if I don't. Hurrah for Gilbert!" and he ran back to the school-room, glad with the news, and strong in his resolve for the future, and only sad when he remembered the wasted days now past recal.

CHAPTER VIII.

“BETTER SUFFER ILL THAN DO ILL.”

So Maurice acted up to his determination, and rose accordingly in his class and in his master's good books. And very much pleased was he when he went up place after place, and his exercises had fewer mistakes, and he found himself higher in the school than he ever had been before.

But, as time went on, he somehow fancied that his schoolfellows did not like him so well as they did formerly. The idle ones laughed at him, and called him a “sap,” which he need not have minded, as I suppose it is short for “sapiens.” But the head boys were angry and jealous of one who obliged them to take extra trouble and pains, if they would keep their position. And then Julius Leigh left for college, and the small boy became solitary and unhappy, for it seemed that just when he was trying his best to do right, everything went wrong with him. And, strange to say, the idle, the careless, the incorrigible Truro began all at once to display such a marked improvement in his school work, that Maurice could not keep pace with him at all.

Some of the boys were able to guess the cause of this sudden industry on the part of Truro, and Coventry also, in the class above ; and they thought that Maurice was working hard for the same reason.

"But it's no good, Moss," said little Needham one day ; "you won't beat Truro."

"I don't care if I don't," said Maurice ; "but if he goes ahead I'll follow. And why shan't I beat him by-and-by?"

"Ah, I know," said Needham, significantly ; "he and Coventry have determined to go this year on Oakley Grange day ; and it's no use your trying against them."

"I'm not trying for anything in particular, except that I want to win a cup like my brother. But what's Oakley Grange day, then?"

"Oh yes ! fancy you're not knowing. I'm not so green as all that. Everybody says you're trying for the Grange ; and I believe it too, only you are shamming. Besides, now that Julius is gone, you'll have no one to help you in your translations."

"Julius never once helped me," said Maurice.

"Well, then, Lichfield does."

"I'm sure he doesn't," cried Maurice, getting red. "Who says so?"

"Who says so ? why, every fellow ; and that's the reason you're so high in class. But Truro will be the one to go, after all, you'll see."

Maurice could ask no more questions just

then, for he was too much taken aback. But although the charge was altogether so unfounded, it explained the reason of his late unpopularity very clearly. And the more he thought about it, the more certain he was that Coventry was at the bottom of it all. He decided to go and find Lichfield, who was reading with two others in the study.

The doctor was not there, so he said, "Please, Lichfield, may I speak to you?"

"Well, Moss, what is it?"

"I say, the fellows say that you tell me all my translations, and that's the reason I get above them; it isn't true, is it?"

"If I were you," said Lichfield, "I would not give them cause for inventing any such foolish stories."

"I don't give them cause," returned Maurice; "but because I work harder now, Coventry goes saying you do my work for me."

"That's good," said another boy; "I'm afraid, Master Moss, your, and Truro's, and Coventry's tricks are too well known. Only take care that the doctor don't catch you at them, that's all."

"I'm sure I've no tricks," said Maurice; "I don't know what you mean."

"Why, I mean to say that you and Truro have got a key between you to get marks for the Grange: at least so I'm told. That is plain speaking enough, and I wonder that you are not ashamed of it."

“I thought better things of you, certainly,” added Lichfield ; “but this comes of bad company.”

“And now go,” said the head boy of the school, “and don’t bring your tales here to us. And I don’t know that I shall not tell the doctor before the Grange day. Go,” cried he, as Maurice lingered, struck dumb and overwhelmed by this new and unexpected blow ; “go, or I shall soon make you.”

The small boy turned, and slowly went into the playground like one in a dream ; and for the second time in his short school experience sat on the bench there lonely and friendless. And then, again, his thoughts turned homeward to his father, and mother, and Helen ; but he had gained command over himself since the last time he sat on that same bench, and he soon dried his eyes and began to think calmly over his position.

“I don’t understand it at all,” he said to himself ; “I only know that Coventry must be at the bottom of it. I’ll go and make up to old Deal, he will tell me, I know.”

So he went and found Deal working as usual in his garden by himself ; and, despite his heavy heart within, he put on an appearance of goodwill, and offered to help.

Now, some of the mischievous boys were so fond of playing tricks upon “old Boards” as they called him, that he had become very wary and shy of allowing any one to assist him, for

his garden was in perfect order, and his flowers really beautiful, and if his pets were handled roughly, or a hoe used in the wrong place, his excitement and wrath were boundless.

So, when Maurice came up, he was very grumpy indeed at first; but he liked his flowers to be admired, and Maurice praised them to his heart's content, so then he asked him to empty his wheelbarrow.

Now this was one of "old Board's" dodges for getting rid of an unwelcome visitor, for the rubbish heap was situated at the farthest end of the doctor's garden, which was a large one, so that the office was generally altogether declined, or the wheelbarrow was never brought back again, which was just what "old Boards" wanted, and he used to go and fetch it himself with much inward satisfaction. So off Maurice set with the wheelbarrow; but when he returned again with it, he found to his surprise that Deal was more sulky than ever.

"I say, be civil to a fellow," said Maurice at length, as he sat on the edge of the wheelbarrow.

"I can't," grunted Deal, "I'm busy."

"I don't think you can," thought Maurice; but he said, "No, but just tell us what they mean by 'Oakley Grange Day,' and then I'll go away if you want me to go; but I'm sure I'm doing no harm sitting here."

"I don't want you to go if you sit there," said Deal, somewhat softened.

"Then tell us about Oakley Grange."

"Don't you know," said Deal, "it's the last cricket match of the season that's played every year in Oakley Grange Park? And the fellows have dinner at the Grange; and the first boy in every class goes, besides the eleven, and they have a jolly day."

"You've never gone, I suppose?" asked Maurice.

"I should think not; I never had the chance."

"How far off is it?"

"A good many miles. Truro will go out of our form this year for certain, if he isn't caught cribbing; but I hope that he will be caught, for it's a shame. You don't crib, do you?"

"I crib! I should think not," said Maurice, indignantly.

"Well, but you got Julius Leigh to do your exercises, that's pretty much the same."

"Oh! Deal, it isn't true; I assure you it isn't true. Did Coventry say so?" And Maurice jumped off the wheelbarrow in his excitement, and put his foot on the border of Deal's garden.

"There now," cried he, "see what you've done; you said you would sit still: now just be off, will you?" And he ran at Maurice with a rake, and a countenance that predicted bad things for his skull, had he not prudently beaten a rapid retreat.

He went in doors, and up into his bedroom,

and sat on the edge of his bed and sobbed aloud. And then he thought it would be best to be idle again; but soon put that notion aside, first, because it would not be right; and secondly, because then they would declare it to be proof positive that Julius had helped him, if he could not do his work as well as usual in his absence.

“I’ll write to Julius,” he exclaimed: “no, I’ll write to Gilbert.” And, suiting the action to the thought, he got his desk and began:—

“DEAR GILBERT,—Dr. Derby told me that you have won a prize cup—he saw it in the newspaper—and some other prizes. I am very glad. I have got up to fifth in my form; but the boys say I have been helped, and that I have a crib, which is not true. But I have been working hard; really I have, Gilbert.

“Some boys crib because they want to go to Oakley Grange Cricket Match; and if they didn’t I might have a chance, I think. Coventry said I got tipped by Julius Leigh, but Coventry does all he can against me. He bowls at my legs at cricket, and he shied a big stone at the boat mamma gave me. ‘I broke the mast, because it would not sail fast,’ he said: but that did not make it sail faster. He has set all the boys against me, and I am so dull. They hardly speak to me—even Lichfield, because they say I crib; but I don’t. Coventry has

taken away all my friends through saying so. I wish you could The bell's ringing, so I cannot write any more.

“Ever your affectionate brother,
“MAURICE GUILDFORD.”

And by return of post he received this answer:—

“DEAR MAURICE,—It is a capital thing, is it not, that I was so fortunate as to get the scholarship and prizes? for now there will not be such a long college bill to pay. You shall, I hope, see the cup at Christmas.

“I am very sorry to hear that you have such an unpleasant schoolfellow, but don't give him cause to dislike you. Of course you would not crib, for cribbing is cheating; and if it is only the boy's fancy that you have been cheating, never mind—they will find out their mistake.

“Just work on as before, and perhaps you will go to Oakley Grange after all. If you keep a clear conscience you will be happy, notwithstanding these trials. ‘*Experientia docet*,’ you know. I have written the following prescription, which I think will suit your case; it is called

“THE FAITHFUL FRIEND.

Question.

“Is there a faithful Friend?
Tell me, where does he dwell?
Not in this land of ours!

He is here when affairs go well,
And the day not broken with showers.
But when the winter lowers,
True to the fruits and flowers,
Gone is your steadfast friend.

Answer.

“ Brother, the Friend above,
Who saves us from our sin,
Out of his boundless love
Taket^h the friendless in.
He is a Friend indeed,
Freely his bounty given ;
Prayer from a soul in need
Opens the gate of heaven.
Dream not of failings there,
His word will sure remain ;
Cast upon Me thy care,
Rest upon Me thy pain.
Come ye that weary are,
Life, hope, and gladness gain ;
All that ye want obtain.
None shall of Him complain,
Christ changeth never ;
Friend now, Friend ever.”

“ With much love, from your affectionate
brother, “ GILBERT.”

“ I think that mine is the very best brother
in all the world,” thought Maurice, when he
had read the letter. “ Now I have him on my
side, I don’t care what anybody says, and I shall
grind on just as before, whether they are friends
or no.”

And then he repeated the words to himself,

“ Christ changeth never ;
Friend now, Friend ever.”

CHAPTER IX.

“TRUTH FINDS FOES WHERE IT MAKES NONE.”

As the Grange day drew near, great was the discussion as to which of the boys would gain the honour and happiness of accompanying the cricket eleven. It was the custom to make the selection by merit, so that the boy who obtained the highest number of marks was chosen, a certain number being given for his standing in class, so many for his exercises, translations, mathematics, behaviour, and so on.

Although there was great competition, the boys could generally guess the result; and this year all those who believed that Coventry and Truro had used keys, put them down as successful of course, although there was much murmuring at the suspected unfairness. Both Coventry and Truro most indignantly denied the accusation, quite as hotly indeed as poor little Maurice did, who was openly pointed at as one who had got on by dishonest means. He was now third in his class, and his other work

was often superior to that of those above him ; and this was at first attributed to his being helped by Julius Leigh, and, after Julius left, to his use of a key.

The only one in the class who seemed to get higher marks still was Truro ; and as for him almost every one felt sure that something was wrong, and the more he denied it the surer they were : his character was so well known. And so, too, was Coventry's in the class above for the matter of that.

But Maurice had the consciousness of having done nothing that was not perfectly fair and straightforward, and so on he went, working as hard as he could. He contented himself with simply denying the accusations brought against him, while he heartily prayed God to help him out of his trouble ; and he often repeated the lines to himself when he felt lonely and out of spirits—

“ Christ changeth never ;
Friend now, Friend ever.”

and so was comforted.

But what made Coventry lie awake so late, and toss about on his bed so uneasily on the night before the examination which should decide who should go to the Grange ? The others in the room slept soundly, but Coventry's conscience must have been a troubled one.

By-and-by he rose softly in the dull moonlight, and taking a padlock-key from his waistcoat pocket, he went on tiptoe to the door of

the room, which he opened slowly and with much care. Drawing it ajar after him, he crept along the passage to the stairs, which he descended without making a sound.

As he stopped on the landing, and listened at the doctor's door, he shivered and seemed half fearful to proceed. Hearing no one moving, he went down step after step to the door of the passage which led to the schoolroom. This was locked and bolted. How his hand trembled as he drew the bolts very gradually back, and hesitated to turn the key. It was hard to turn, and once, and twice he tried ; but it gave at last, and the lock flew back with a loud snap.

Ah ! what whispered sound came hissing from between his teeth in his anger and fear of discovery ? Can a boy so young have learned already to curse and to swear ? He had a good, sweet mother at home, too, who taught him well, and gentle sisters who thought much of him. He had forgotten them, though their prayers, and hopes, and expectations were strong in his behalf, as he had evidently forgotten his Father in heaven.

He felt his way in the dark schoolroom to the doctor's desk, and taking from it a match, he lit a taper that stood there. He then went to his own desk, which he opened with his key. "What a good thing it is that Truro did what I told him," he breathed, as he took out three or four books, and closed the desk again. But just then a sound overhead reached his ears ;

he instantly blew out the taper, and stood undecided and listening. "Some one is coming down," he thought. He quickly tore out a leaf from each of the books and threw them on the floor, and felt his way to Maurice's desk and put the books in there. Back he hurried along the passage; he bolted the door, but dared not lock it, and up stairs again quickly and silently he crept, and into his room, and into his bed, but not to sleep; for he lay listening and excited, and in such a state of mind as I hope few small boys have experienced, and which I will not stop to describe.

When next morning he entered the school-room, Truro whispered, "What I told you is true, I'm certain, for the doctor is coming down himself, and won't there be a row! Have you done anything with those books, for we can't get at them now?"

"All right," said Coventry, as the doctor entered the room. He proceeded to call over the names, and Maurice was only just in time to answer "adsum." He then had prayers. Prayers over, he addressed the boys to this effect, "Before you begin your usual work, I regret to have to say to you that I have grounds for a suspicion that some boys in the lower forms have been gaining marks by dishonest means. The manner in which this work has been done has led me to the conclusion that keys have been used by certain of the candidates for to-morrow's holiday. I will therefore

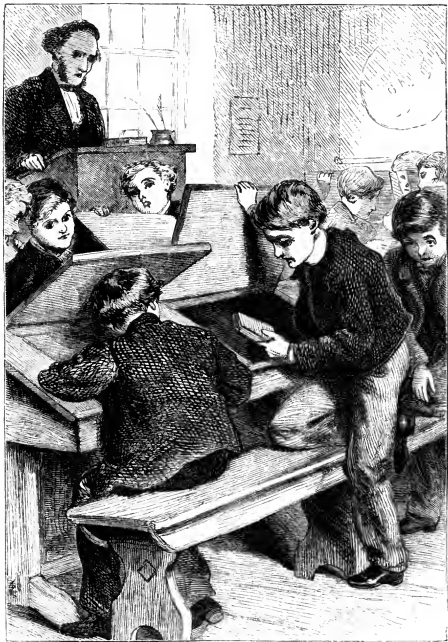
examine each class separately to-day, and the boy in each that passes the most creditably shall go to the Grange with the cricketers. But that there shall be no possibility of unfair assistance, I desire that your desks be emptied before the papers are issued, and perhaps we may thus detect the dishonest fellows, by finding the books in their possession ; at all events, they cannot escape the comparison of the results of this examination with their previous work."

The desks were accordingly thrown open ; the boys looked at one another, and mostly at Coventry, Truro, and Maurice. But when the latter opened his desk he saw the books and their titles, and a red flush covered his face which he could not hide, neither did he try to hide it.

"Leave your desks as they are," said the doctor, "and let me examine them." And worthy of examination truly some of them were, for the medley of articles would have thoroughly stocked a curiosity shop.

"These, sir," said Maurice, when the doctor came to him, "are in my desk, but I don't know how they came there ; I never used or even saw them before." At which speech some of the boys laughed and hissed, and Coventry's voice was loudest.

"This is hard to believe, Guildford," said the doctor ; "but here is a key to a second form book. We must get to the bottom of this." And then he began a searching cross-examina-



THE DISCOVERY.



tion, but could get no other answer from Maurice but that he positively knew nothing whatever about them.

“Well, now,” said the doctor at last, “I put this matter into the hands of the three head boys, and for your own honour’s sake you ought to discover such offenders as these, that they may be deservedly punished; but now that the desks are empty I will give out examination papers.”

So after breakfast each boy set to work by himself, the doctor walking up and down the school all the while to see that now, at all events, there was no cheating going on.

“When you have done as much as you can, and as well as you can, leave the schoolroom,” said the doctor; and soon many an excited group was to be seen in the playground discussing the finding of the books in Maurice’s desk.

The loudest in condemning him was Coventry; but little Needham came up to him, and said, “Never fear, Moss, I don’t think the books were yours. I know something.”

But Maurice put up a prayer to God inwardly to give him help in his trouble, for his dear Son’s sake. “I too often forget thee,” thought he, “when things go well with me, but forgive me and be with me now.”

By-and-by the head boys held a court of inquiry, and the circumstance of the books being found as they were with the torn leaves was especially commented on.

"The second class key was certainly used as late as yesterday," said Lichfield, "for here is a mark."

"I am certain the books were not in my desk when I shut it last evening," said Maurice, "for I took out Brentford's white mouse the last thing."

"Oh, yes," said Coventry, "a likely story."

"But I say, Coventry," said Needham, "where did you go last night when you went down stairs, and stayed such a time? You thought I was asleep, but I wasn't."

"What's that?" they all said in a breath.

And then Needham told how that the opening of the door awoke him, and he was frightened; but he saw Coventry go down stairs, and heard him open the passage door and go into the schoolroom and stay there some time.

"I only went to get some money I left out on my desk," said Coventry, looking very confused; "but as for you, you little spy, I will _____"

"No, no," said Lichfield, "let us hear all about it. I wonder if these leaves were torn lately," added he, "it looks like it. Just see behind the stove, for the school sweepings are generally left there, I think."

They looked, and sure enough there were the torn pieces of the pages with Coventry's and Truro's names in their own handwriting.

It need not to be told what turn the affairs

took then. Two of the culprits were identified at all events. But how about Maurice?

"The examination will show," said Lichfield.

But Maurice stole away up to his room by himself, and knelt down by his bedside and gave God the praise.

Half an hour afterwards a party of the boys were running down to the beach for a bathe after their hard work of the morning's examination; and Maurice was among them in high spirits, for his companions had begun to change their opinion in his favour.

"You fellows run round and tell Stokes to make haste and come down," said one, "and Moss and I will go straight on."

They did so accordingly, for they were not allowed to bathe unless Stokes, the boatman, was with them. So Maurice and Brentford proceeded to the beach, and walked along the shingle to the usual bathing-place.

"How long they are," said Maurice.

"They're not coming by the beach," said Brentford; "they'll come by the road, of course."

"Then they're just here," said Maurice, "for we have been an age trudging over these pebbles. I shall undress."

"You had better just wait for Stokes," said Brentford.

"I don't see why. I shall just have a swim out and back again, and he'll be here before that." So saying, Maurice put his clothes in a

heap, and running down the shelving beach, splashed into the cool water, and struck out from the shore.

Not many minutes passed before Stokes with the rest of the boys came to the edge of the cliff above, and began to descend the steep path; but Stokes, catching sight of Maurice swimming, cried out with an exclamation, "That boy'll never get back, he'll be carried out to sea; dear! dear!" So, without losing a moment, he ran wildly down, throwing off his clothes as he jumped from step to step.

He shouted to the other boys as he crossed the beach, on no account to enter the water, and then made for Maurice with vigorous strokes. He, poor lad, little imagining the danger he was in, swam farther and farther away, the exercise well suiting his excited nerves.

But when at last he turned, and saw the distance from the shore, he began to be alarmed. And he soon understood the reason, for he found that he could scarcely make any way at all back against the tide, which was running out so unusually fast.

For some time he swam with all his strength, but began to feel himself grow weak.

He made less and less progress, and soon apparently none at all. Again and again he repeated his violent efforts, but they only left him more powerless than before. His thoughts at this time were quite collected and calm. He felt it was useless to struggle any more. "I am

going to be drowned," he thought. "I can't be saved, it is impossible. It was all my own fault." And then he prayed in broken words to the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive him, and to take him to heaven.

"I know thou hearest me out here in the sea," he said, "and when thou hearest forgive."

But then his thoughts wandered, and they wandered home. Though he fancied he was out in the middle of the Channel between England and France, he felt quite happy; and he saw his dear mother, his father, and Helen; and Helen was sitting at his mother's feet sweetly singing, and she smiled at him, and the words she sang were these—

"Christ changeth never;
Friend now, Friend ever."

And then a delicious sensation stole over him, and he felt as he never had felt before. So dreamily peaceful, so perfectly at rest. And then there floated through his brain many things that he had done long ago. He wandered through the fir plantations, and saw the rabbits at play. He made cowslip balls on the lawn, and Helen was with him by his side all the while, and he held the thread while she strung the flowers. He heard the old clock's tick, tick, in the oak dining-room at home, and it grew louder and louder, and then he heard his mother calling him "Maurice, Maurice;" and there was a great rushing noise, and then all was still.

CHAPTER X.

“HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.”

“WHERE am I?” murmured a broken, feeble voice.

“You’re in good hands, and on dry land once more, thank God!” was the answer.

“Have I been asleep for—a week; I mean—for—for a month”—at which some of the bystanders could scarcely refrain from laughing, for all they were so frightened.

“I believe his wits are washed away,” said one of the group.

“No, his head is still swimming a little, that’s all,” said another.

“He’s got water on the brain,” said a third; for they knew that all danger was now passed, and their fun was uncontrollable in the reaction from alarm to joy.

“Be quiet, you boys,” said the surgeon; “and now that I do not want you any more, you had better clear out of the room; one can stay, however, and help me to put him to bed; you,” he added, addressing Lichfield. “He must be kept quiet, and then he’ll do very well.”

So our rash little friend Maurice—for of course it was he—was warmly tucked up in bed, and left to his own reflections. For a long time he slept profoundly; and when he awoke he was himself again, though very weak and immoderately hungry.

It was the morning of the Grange Day; and after breakfast Lichfield came into his room, and sat by his bedside.

“Well, old fellow,” said he, “give me your hand; you don’t look very much the worse for your adventure, though you had such a hard fight for it. But, Moss, forgive me.”

“Forgive you,” said Maurice, “what for?”

“For my suspicion that you were such another as Coventry and Truro have proved themselves to be. The list is out, and you are first in your class. Forgive me, but appearances were against you, and I could not understand your indifference. I thought you were so hardened that you intended to brazen it out.”

“Oh, Lichfield, to think that I could cheat!”

“Well, I’ve seen so much of it at a former school where the fellows thought it no disgrace, but rather the contrary, to deceive the masters, though not to cheat one another, that the difficulty was to think you honest. But forgive me, old boy, and forget all about it, and be friends.”

“Forget it, I should think so,” said Maurice. “I knew it would all come right in the end, and that you would soon find out your mistake. But am I really first?”

“First by a long way; and the doctor told me that your papers showed you must have been working hard and well. Truro, of course, couldn’t do anything; and Coventry tried to take the fellows in at the last, and persuade them he was dreadfully ill-treated; but the doctor exposed them both before the whole school.”

“Will they be sent away, do you think?”

“I don’t know; but they deserve it.”

“I say, Lichfield,” asked Maurice, “how long was I in the water? was I nearly drowned?”

“You were, indeed! God has been very good to you, Moss. And it was a most merciful Providence that the doctor was at home, and knew the best method for restoring you. None of us knew the plan, and besides many thought you were dead.”

“What did the doctor do, then?” asked Maurice, with tears in his eyes.

“He hurried down at once to the shore where you were lying, and began to pump air into your lungs, by drawing your arms above your head and pressing your elbows against your sides, while I held a bottle of tremendously strong smelling-salts to your nose; and you didn’t seem to like that, and by-and-by began to breathe a little better. And then we set to work to rub you, and wrap you in our coats to make you warm. And when you recovered slightly we carried you up, and the doctor put you in a warm bath for a minute or two, and

ordered a large mustard plaster for your chest; but you got better so quickly that it wasn't needed. But what in the world made you think of swimming out alone with the spring tide running out like that?"

"I forgot all about the tide," said Maurice; "but I was well punished anyhow. How I want to thank Stokes for saving me!"

"From all accounts, he only just did it," said Lichfield; "another yard or two, and he himself must have given in. Had he not been such a splendid swimmer he could not have saved you. When he reached you you were rolling about like a porpoise, but fortunately you were unconscious; and he lugged you along by the nape of the neck, like a drowned puppy."

"Oh, Lichfield, don't laugh about it. I can't, I've been too near death. God has been very gracious in sparing me, and I have thanked him over and over again. I don't know why he should, I am sure; for I have sinned so deeply against him. I cannot keep myself from doing wrong, do what I will. Why is it, Lichfield?"

"Well, Moss, you are right to take a serious view of this very narrow escape of yours. I am not one to persuade you to look at it in any other light, but to encourage you to praise the Lord for his goodness, and to ask him for help to spend your spared life in his service. Indeed I wish that you and all the fellows would think always as you do now. But as to

doing right, there are a good many reasons why you and I find it very hard ; but the chief reason is because our hearts are naturally inclined to do wrong, and it's hard to go against nature."

"I'm sure my heart is," said Maurice ; "I can't think what made me go in yesterday without Stokes. I'm often called 'perverse ;' and I believe it's true that I am. I so often take it into my head to go and do a thing just because I oughtn't."

"Well, there's a cure for it, I believe."

"I don't think I shall ever be cured then, Lichfield, for it's in my nature."

"I know it is," said Lichfield, "and in mine, and in everybody's ; and not perversity against what man bids us only, but also against what God commands, and that's worse. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' But there's a cure, nevertheless."

"It is God that works it, then," said Maurice ; "for no one else can cure me, I think."

"Yes, you are right. No man can change the heart that is naturally corrupt since the time that the first created man fell into sin. No power but God's can work that change. He alone can cast out and bind the strong man armed that rules there. But this God does. It is the work of his Holy Spirit. He causes a change and renewal of the old bad self, and gives secret inward strength to the new. Don't you remember what our blessed Lord said to

Nicodemus—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God?"

"I don't think that I shall ever do better by my own trying, certainly," said Maurice.

"No, you will not, perhaps: for it is not a question of doing and leaving undone. It is a change in the heart that is wanted, then the rest will follow. Our Lord said, 'Ye must be born again,' telling Nicodemus not to marvel at that saying. And when we see the evil of our heart I am sure we need not marvel at this necessity of a new birth."

"Not if we wish to live in God's presence," said Maurice.

"Yes, in his presence here and hereafter," added Lichfield. "But we will talk more upon this subject by-and-by, if you like. You must get up now, and see if you're fit to go to the Grange."

"Oh, hurrah! it's the Grange day, and I'm going," and Maurice jumped out of bed, but then he said, "Dear me, how queer I feel; all shaky." And he quite tottered as he walked across the room, and Lichfield laughed at him, and said, "You must walk better than that, or you can't go."

"Get me some more breakfast, then," said Maurice, "I'm so hungry."

"Why you've only just finished that immense plate of bread and butter, you gormandizer!"

"But I don't feel as if I'd eaten a bit, and I'm ever so much thinner than I was yesterday. What time do the fellows go?"

"Why, they have started two hours ago or more," said Lichfield.

"What!" exclaimed Maurice, pausing in his ablutions and looking at him through his wet hair, "gone!"

"I should think so, in an omnibus and four horses and two horns; and a jolly row they made."

"How are we going, then?"

"Ah! how do you think? But it depends upon you're being strong enough."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Maurice, "now."

"Why, I'm to drive you over quietly in Romford's basket-carriage."

"Oh!" shouted Maurice, "how awfully jolly. Did the doctor say so?"

"Yes; and he told me to tell you that it is the reward of honesty. But you must make haste and dress, and get something to eat down stairs if you want it. I must go and make preparations."

And was not Maurice a happy thankful boy then? And when the door was shut, and he heard the retreating footsteps die away, he slid down upon his knees by his little bedside and burst into tears. "I thank thee, O my Father," he said; "I thank thee, for thou hast been very good to me. O blot out the past, that I may live a new life, and make me thine own

child, for thy dear Son's sake. May thy grace and the Holy Spirit's favour rest upon me, that I may be thy soldier and servant to my life's end. And forgive those two boys, and change their hearts. Have pity upon them, and bring them back to thy fold again; and may I never wander from it so as to lose the light of thy countenance and thy guiding hand."

So he prayed, and his prayer was heard in heaven. For this was a turning point in Maurice's inner life. His eyes were opened now to see things in a different light. He felt the practical necessity of godliness, and the beauty of holiness, as he never felt it before. He saw a truth and reality in inward spiritual grace that he never before appreciated. He was not now able to explain, or fully understand, or express in words, the comfort and the relief he experienced; but his heart leapt up as if loosed from a chain that bound it. He seemed to have breathed a breath of the air of heaven, and it made his soul glow within, and he was filled with peaceful and holy joy.

And when, in after years, he "summoned up remembrance of things past," he found the serious impressions of this time too deep to be ever effaced, and from this hour he dated his entrance upon the true Christian course.

There is a very old saying, and often, alas! a true one—

"After the sick man had recovered his sore,
He lived worse than ever he did before."

But this was not the case with Maurice. He did not so despise the chastening of the Lord.

It was not very long before Lichfield and Maurice were on their way to the Grange in the little basket-carriage. They trotted down the hills and through the pleasant valleys, let the pony drink at more than one rippling stream of clear brown-coloured water, and then toiled slowly up the other side between high banks gay with autumn flowers, with here and there a peep over the landscape, so bright with fields of corn that it seemed to laugh and sing.

Maurice was quiet and subdued, but he enjoyed all this with his very soul.

"What a lovely world we live in," he said. "Thank God for letting me see all this beauty a little longer. Ought I not to serve him better and love him more? But, after all, we need Christ's pardon, don't we?"

"Yes," said Lichfield, "that is what I was saying before; our own righteousness is as filthy rags in which to stand before God. We need the righteousness of Christ to put on for a dress. Was not that a good old saying among the early Christians—'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;' and it is just as acceptable now, and so it will be to the end of the world."

"Yes," thought Maurice, "Christ changeth never; Friend now, Friend ever."

"They loved to repeat it long ago," continued Lichfield; "and now it is none the less sweet, for we know that Christ said 'I am the

way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'"

"Ah!" said Maurice, "that is the greatest proof of God's love and goodness after all, to die that we might live, and our redemption is sure 'through him that died.' Yes, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is our part then, by his Holy Spirit's help, to show forth his praise not only with our lips, but in our lives."

So they talked as they wound up a steep ascent; but they had not proceeded far on level ground before Lichfield pulled up, saying, "See here, which road are we to take? It is a four-cross, and no direction post."

"There is one," said Maurice, "but it's blown down. It's no good, for we don't know which way the arms ought to point. What are we to do?"

"No," said Lichfield, "I don't see that it is. We are in a fix."

Some time they consulted, and the pony took the opportunity of having a mouthful or two of fresh grass by the roadside.

"Well," cried Lichfield at length, "we are a couple of silly fellows. One of the arms points to where we came from, and so of course we know the direction of the rest."

"Of course," said Maurice; and a merry laugh they had at the expense of their wits.

By-and-by they drew near Oakley Grange; and as they approached they caught a distant

glimpse now and then of a gay fluttering flag through the spreading branches of the elms which skirted the park, and soon some cheerful sounds reached their ears, which told them that the cricket match was well contested. As they drew up they saw that the stumps were pitched in a lovely glade of majestic elms; but a harder hit than usual sent the ball bounding into the thick brake-fern. Through the trees on one side they could see the buildings of the Grange, and the undulating park beyond; and on the other the falling ground showed the little village to be near, and a richly-wooded valley spreading far away in the distance. Little lads and lasses chased one another among the holes of the patriarchal trees, and a ring of spectators showed the interest taken in the game. But what has come to Maurice? Surely it is not the game that excites him so deeply, though it is a close one. See, the tears are running down his cheeks, and he is paler than ever.

“Why, Moss, what’s the matter?” cried Lichfield, alarmed.

“Oh, there’s papa and mamma, and Helen on Raglan;” and Maurice sobbed with joy.

Yes, it was very true. Maurice’s sharp eyes had detected them standing in a group with many others, and his cup of joy ran over.

Oh! what a meeting was that! and how Maurice’s parents lifted up their hearts with gratitude that their boy was spared to them.

"How thin he is," said Helen, looking at him with loving eyes.

"Yes, but how much he's grown," said his mother. "He is no longer a small boy now."

"Do you know, Maurice," said Helen, "that we are to take you home for a day or two, till you get strong again. Isn't it delightful? and how much we shall have to talk about. Papa has spoken to Dr. Derby, and he has given you leave."

How Maurice received this piece of news the reader may imagine; and when the game was won (for the schoolboys won it), and the party was over at the hospitable Grange, the phaeton started with Maurice in the little seat behind, and Helen riding on Raglan by the side; and this time there was nothing to cloud the brightness of her enjoyment. But both she, and Maurice too, always looked back upon this day as the very happiest in all the recollections of their early life.

THE END.



